

Sale of horticultural peat to be banned in move to protect England's precious peatlands

All sales of peat to amateur gardeners in England will be banned by 2024, the Government has announced today (Saturday 27th August).

Peatlands are the UK's largest carbon store but only approximately 13% of our peatlands are in a near-natural state. This degradation has occurred due to drainage for agricultural use, overgrazing and burning, as well as extraction for use in growing media. Bagged retail growing media accounts for 70% of the peat sold in the UK and is frequently misused, for example being used as a soil improver rather than a medium in which to propagate plants. When this extraction takes place, the carbon stored inside the bog is released as carbon dioxide, contributing to climate change.

Peat extraction also degrades the state of the wider peatland landscape, damaging habitats for some of our rarest wildlife such as the swallowtail butterfly, hen harriers and short-eared owls, and negatively impacting peat's ability to prevent flooding and filter water. A significant proportion of the UK's water supply lands or flows through peatlands.

The measures announced today will contribute to efforts to achieve our ambitious target of restoring 35,000 hectares of peatlands by 2025 and wider efforts to achieve net zero.

The announcement follows an [extensive public consultation](#), which received more than 5,000 responses with over 95% in favour of government taking action to ban retail peat sales. The Government has also pledged to continue to work closely with the professional horticulture sector on speeding up their transition to peat-free alternatives ahead of a ban for the professional horticulture sector, recognising that the professional horticulture sector faces additional technical barriers that will take longer to overcome.

The Government is also launching a new £5 million fund to promote the use of peatlands for sustainable farming. It will support the uptake of paludiculture – the practice of farming on rewetted peatland – which will help further safeguard food security, produce alternatives to horticultural peat and reduce environmental impacts.

Environment Minister Richard Benyon said:

This Government understands the importance of keeping peat healthy and in the ground, here and around the world – to lock up carbon, strengthen drought resilience and serve as a powerful nature-based solution to climate change.

The actions announced today mark a new chapter in the story of our iconic peatlands – safeguarding their long-term health and vitality as part of our commitments to achieve Net Zero and deliver our 25 Year Environment Plan.

Chair of Natural England, Tony Juniper said:

Peatlands are precious ecosystems that harbor beautiful and fascinating wildlife, shape the character of iconic landscapes, purify water and help to reduce flood risk. They are also our largest natural carbon stores, locking away over 580 million tonnes. This ban on the sale of peat-based compost and work to phase out use in other areas is an essential step toward protecting these valuable natural assets and allowing for the recovery of degraded areas.

We are working with Defra and partners on the ground to restore thousands of hectares of peatland habitats, and today have awarded over £11 million to restore lowland sites in the south-west of England, and upland sites in the north of England. These projects will have multiple benefits, holding carbon, helping some of our scarcest wildlife to recover, reduce flood risk and render landscapes more resilient to climate change impacts such as drought and fire.

Professor Alistair Griffiths, Director of Science and Collections at the Royal Horticultural Society, said:

Peatlands are the world's largest carbon store on land, with great potential to store carbon long term, helping to reach net zero. They reduce flooding, when rewetted reduce fire risks and provide valuable habitats for both plants and animals. To tackle the climate and biodiversity crises, it is essential that we have a sustainable transition to peat-free alternative growing medias. The RHS stopped selling peat-based growing media bags in 2019 and will continue to work with Defra, industry and gardeners to accelerate the transition to peat-free.

Through round two of the Nature for Climate Fund Peatland Restoration Grant, Natural England has today awarded nearly £11 million to six projects to support restoration works on over 7,000 hectares of peatland, adding to more than 8,000 hectares already funded through round one.

Round two of the Restoration Grant has supported a blend of lowland and upland restoration works, with the Somerset Peatland Partnership convening to restore lowland sites in the south-west of England, and the Great North Bog and Moors for the Future partnerships restoring upland sites in the north of

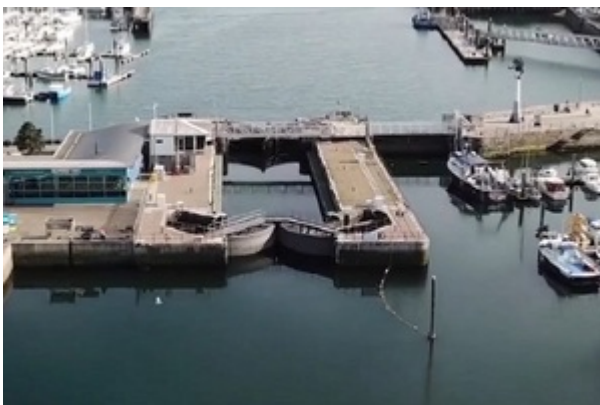
England. We will also shortly be announcing the winners of our second round of Discovery Grants.

New alternatives to horticultural peat, produced through paludiculture and otherwise, present the opportunity for England to protect nature through green job creation, as well as become one of the global leaders in the production and sale of sustainable growing media.

[Sutton Harbour maintenance rescheduled for 2023](#)

Press release

Essential work to repair Sutton Harbour lock gates for mid-September 2022 to April 2023 will be rescheduled following feedback from engagement meetings.



Sutton Harbour needs repair and maintenance work which will involve divers working underwater

Image credit: Sutton Harbour Group

Meetings in July and August between the Environment Agency and Sutton Harbour Group and harbour users recognised that the [scheduled £3m of maintenance work needed to happen to replace worn underwater lock gate cills and other key maintenance items](#).

The discussions yielded many helpful comments, including the need for the work to be put back to allow for more conversation about ways to mitigate impact. The Environment Agency and Sutton Harbour Group agree with the feedback received and are grateful to all who have expressed interest in this project.

No new date has been set, but the works will commence in 2023. Further

engagement is now planned with working groups currently being established representing the fishing fleet and berth holders. These groups will provide the opportunity to inform the project in finding an optimum time and supplemental alternative arrangements to facilitate the carrying out of the essential work.

Further feedback gained from the meetings to date will also be considered. The schedule for the working sessions and rescheduling of the stakeholder meetings previously announced will be published in due course.

The maintenance work involves replacing worn underwater lock gate cills, to ensure the locks can continue to reduce flood risk and provide commercial and amenity benefit to Plymouth. Funding for the works is allocated and the works must be completed no later than April 2024 to maintain the harbour's integrity, reduce any risks of further damage from delaying the repairs, and provide essential flood protection.

Published 26 August 2022

[Secretary of State announces the appointment of new Commissioner to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission](#)

Press release

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Right Honourable Shailesh Vara MP, has announced the appointment of Justin Kouame to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.



Mr Kouame will take up the appointment with effect from 1 September 2022.

Mr Kouame was formerly Chair of the Northern Ireland Community of Refugees and Asylum Seekers and member of the Northern Ireland Race Equality Sub-Group and Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities.

Background

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission (the 'NIHRC') was created by the Northern Ireland Act 1998, as part of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement.

The NIHRC was established in 1999 and operates as an executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the Northern Ireland Office.

Its powers and duties are set out in legislation, and it operates in compliance with UN General Assembly resolution 48/134 (the 'Paris Principles') on National Human Rights Institutions. The NIHRC's functions include keeping under review the adequacy and effectiveness in Northern Ireland of law and practice relating to the protection of human rights and promoting understanding and awareness of the importance of human rights in Northern Ireland.

Further information about the work of the Commission can be found [here](#).

Terms of appointment

- This position is part-time for a period of three years ending on 31 August 2025.
- The position receives a fixed annual remuneration of £7,500.
- The position is not pensionable.

Political Activity

All appointments are made on merit and with regards to the statutory requirements. Political activity plays no part in the selection process. However, in accordance with the original Nolan recommendations, there is a requirement for appointees' political activity in defined categories to be made public.

Mr Kouame has declared that he has not been politically active in the last five years.

Regulation

The Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointment (OCPA) regulates appointments to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission.

Statutory Requirements

The Secretary of State makes appointments to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission in accordance with the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

Board Member Reappointments

News story

Marcus Jones MP, the Minister for Housing and Planning, has reappointed Mark Rennison, Vanessa Murden and Sadie Morgan to Homes England's Board.



Homes England, the government's housing and regeneration agency, is pleased to confirm that Marcus Jones MP, the Minister for Housing and Planning, has reappointed Mark Rennison, Vanessa Murden and Sadie Morgan to Homes England's Board.

All three members first joined the Agency's Board in August 2019, and will now continue to serve until August 2025, providing continuity amongst the agency's senior leadership.

Peter Freeman CBE, Chair of Homes England, commented:

Mark, Venessa and Sadie are valued Board members and committee chairs that each bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the Agency.

Their continued guidance will be as valuable as ever as the Agency adopts a more place-based approach, working strategically across the country to drive regeneration, creating homes and economic growth and supporting the Government's levelling up agenda.

You can see full details of our Board here: <https://bit.ly/3lGaFQY>

Published 26 August 2022

Community support funding announced for people of Liverpool

News story

Home Secretary made the announcement on a visit to Liverpool.



The Home Secretary has today- announced a £150,000 package to support the communities of Liverpool and Knowsley in the wake of the tragic shootings in the city. This will provide specialist trauma informed support in nearby schools, as well as mental health provisions for those closely affected.

Following the horrific killings of Sam Rimmer, Ashley Dale and Olivia Pratt-Korbel in Merseyside within a week of each other, the Home Secretary also announced £350,000 to expand the 'Clear, Hold, Build' pilot to other areas in Merseyside affected by Serious and Organised Crime.

The pilot sees both a proactive policing response and multi-agency working to support communities worst affected by Organised Crime Groups to make them more resilient and less susceptible to their activities.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

The whole country has been appalled at the spate of violence in Liverpool over the past couple of weeks, which has tragically left 9 people dead, including 9 year old Olivia.

The impact on the wider community is immense, which is why we are providing funding for specialist trauma and mental health support for those who need it, as well as expanding the 'Clear, Hold, Build' pilot to disrupt Merseyside's corrosive and deadly Organised Crime Groups.

We will stop at nothing to drive down serious violence and ensure that fewer families have to endure the pain of losing a loved one in this way.

Established in the Birkenhead area of Merseyside in January 2022, the pilot has focused on making sustainable reductions in firearms and knife crime offences, whilst improving community confidence and delivering preventative programmes to over 2,000 young people in the area.

Priti Patel made the announcement on a visit to Liverpool today where she met with Merseyside Police's Chief Constable, to receive an update on the investigation, and then with the local policing commander to understand the impact the violence has had on the community and what resilience plans are being put in place.

Published 26 August 2022